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NATIONAL COMMUNICATIONS FROM PARTIES INCLUDED IN ANNEX I TO THE CONVENTION

CONSIDERATION OF THE REVIEWS OF NATIONAL COMMUNICATIONS FROM PARTIES INCLUDED IN ANNEX I TO THE CONVENTION

Note by the secretariat

I. INTRODUCTION

A. Mandate

1. In accordance with Article 12 of the Convention each Party is required to communicate to the Conference of the Parties (COP), through the secretariat, information related to its implementation of the Convention.

2. At its sixteenth session, the Subsidiary Body for Implementation (SBI 16) took note of suggestions to further improve the process of reviewing national communications from Parties included in Annex I to the Convention (Annex I Parties) (FCCC/SBI/2002/3). The SBI acknowledged the proven utility of the current review process and concluded that any improvement to this process would require further consideration, taking into account, inter alia, financial and budgetary implications. The SBI agreed to consider this issue, including the periodicity of the consideration of matters related to national communications from Annex I Parties, at its seventeenth session.

B. Scope of the note

3. This note is intended to facilitate further discussion on the consideration of the reviews of national communications from Annex I Parties. It summarizes the views expressed by Parties at SBI 16 on this issue and on other areas, including the timeliness of submission of national communications, the respective roles of the SBI, the Subsidiary Body for Scientific and Technological Advice (SBSTA) and the COP in the consideration of results of the review process, the scope and depth of analysis of emission trends, and those factors underlying the trends that require more detailed consideration. The note also takes into account proposed options outlined in document FCCC/SBI/2002/3 on improvements in the process of consideration of national communications and of information in the in-depth review reports (IDRs) contained in document FCCC/SBI/2002/3.

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C. Possible action by the SBI

4. The SBI may wish to consider the information contained in this note together with information presented in document FCCC/SBI/2002/3. It may wish to provide guidance to Parties and to the secretariat on further consideration of information contained in the national communications and in IDRs, with the aim of improving the review process. The SBI may also wish to recommend to the COP a draft decision establishing a date for submission of the fourth national communications from Annex I Parties.

II. VIEWS BY PARTIES AND SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER ACTION

5. At SBI 16 a general desire was expressed to discuss further possible options for the consideration of information contained in the national communications from Annex I Parties. All Parties agreed that national communications, greenhouse gas (GHG) inventories and IDRs are valuable sources of information, and that they attach great importance to the preparation of national communications, as part of their reporting obligations under the Convention and as the main means of sharing information.

6. Parties were of the view that more use could be made of national communications and IDRs, especially given that substantial efforts by national teams go into their preparation, and that consideration of their results by the COP and the SBI could assist Parties in the implementation of their national climate programmes. It was also suggested that any further steps aimed at improving the consideration of these reports should focus on presenting the information in a manner that is even more transparent and useful to Parties.

7. When commenting on document FCCC/SBI/2002/3, Parties expressed the view that there was a need to increase the utility of the information contained in the national communications as well as that coming out of the review process. It was felt that more detailed analysis of the historical trends in GHG emissions, in particular the analysis of emission trends among Parties and of the factors underlying those trends, may be required.

A. Updating the current guidelines

8. Parties were generally satisfied with the current guidelines for the preparation of national communications and with the scope of guidance to Parties, which, in their opinion, allows them to submit sufficient information on the implementation of the Convention. Undertaking major revisions to the guidelines at this stage was not deemed necessary because Parties might be better prepared to provide their suggestions on the improvements to the guidelines at a later stage, possibly after reporting on their demonstrable progress, pursuant to Article 3.2 of the Kyoto Protocol.[1]

9. **Suggestion**: Parties may wish to return to the issue of the feasibility of revising the guidelines for the preparation of national communications from Annex I Parties at a later stage.

B. Consideration of the information from the review process

10. There was a clear preference to maintain the national communications process at the technical level of providing sound and transparent information, and to avoid it becoming a political process. Concern was expressed at the proposal to use current GHG data to assess the implementation of Article 4.2 (a) and (b) of the Convention[2] and as an input to the consideration of demonstrable progress

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[1] See draft decision on demonstrable progress forwarded by the SBSTA at its sixteenth session for adoption by the COP at its eighth session (FCCC/SBSTA/2002/L.6/Add.1).

[2] The COP at its eighth session is expected to consider an agenda item on the second review of adequacy of Article 4.2 (a) and (b) of the Convention.

under Article 3.2 of the Protocol.[3] It was argued that this is not necessary because there will be a separate report prepared after 2005 on demonstrable progress and information contained in the IDR reports may serve as an input to its preparation.

11. It was mentioned that there have been several different interpretations of the provisions of Article 4.2 (a) and (b) of the Convention, and that this has been subject to much debate for several years. Thus using available information to assess the implementation of Article 4.2 (a) and (b) creates the impression that there is an agreed interpretation of these provisions and may pre-empt the outcome of debates yet to come.

12. It was also indicated, while commenting on the historical trends in GHG emissions presented in document FCCC/SBI/2002/3, that further discussions and analysis might be helpful, given that the figures showing a reduction in GHG emissions by Annex I Parties may be misleading; and that participation by experts from developing countries in the analysis of information is necessary and should be further strengthened.

13. It was also maintained that a serious review of national communications from Annex I Parties and more in-depth analysis of the information provided therein would contribute to improving the quality of the evaluation of these reports as well as to assisting all Parties in ensuring that all processes that run counter to the objective of the Convention will be phased out.

14. It was pointed out that the agenda for the SBSTA at its seventeenth session contains an item entitled "Good practices in policies and measures", which is linked to the analysis of factors affecting emission trends. It was suggested that there might be merit in considering the implementation aspects of policies and measures in conjunction with consideration of national communications.

15. It was mentioned in this context that assessing the effectiveness of policies and measures taken for a specific period is a complex and difficult task, and doubts were expressed whether it would be possible to assess these policies and measures on the basis of GHG emission trends.

16. **Suggestion**: Parties may wish to reflect on the feasibility of the SBI discussing issues related to "good practices in policies and measures" in connection with the consideration of national communications and results of the IDRs. They may also wish to provide guidance to the secretariat on the scope of possible analysis of historical trends in GHG emissions.

C. Possible options for the improvement of the review process

17. Document FCCC/SBI/2002/3 presented some options relating to a process for facilitating the assessment of information contained in the IDR reports and in the compilation and synthesis report. It was proposed that the SBI might wish to consider convening an ad hoc group of experts on Annex I national communications. This group could examine the information contained in several IDR reports as they became available and forward its main findings to the SBI for further consideration. Alternatively, workshops dedicated to considering the results of the review could be conducted in 2003 and 2004. A combination of the above approaches could also be envisaged.

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[3] See footnote 1.

18. There was some concern expressed about financial resource constraints[4] and overburdening the secretariat with the work involved in organizing and conducting workshops dedicated to the consideration of results of the reviews. Regarding convening an ad hoc group of experts on Annex I communications, some Parties did not favour the creation of any new process to consider information contained in the national communications. Other Parties supported the use of ad hoc groups of experts to examine the information from a number of published IDRs and forward the results of this consideration to the SBI, emphasizing that this could be a useful approach even if all Parties have not reported on time. However, should such a group be established, careful consideration would need to be given to its terms of reference.

19. General satisfaction was expressed with the feedback and conclusions prepared by experts participating in the IDRs. The current process was perceived as well developed, adequate and enabling an effective assessment of Parties' implementation of the Convention. Support for the secretariat presenting the main results of IDRs and emissions trends based on GHG inventory data at SBI sessions, in particular through in-session presentations, was reiterated.

20. **Suggestions**:

(a) Parties may wish to consider ways of making more use of information contained in national communications, for example, by taking into account information contained in compilation and synthesis reports, as well as in the IDRs, when considering agenda items at SBSTA and SBI sessions where such information may be relevant;

(b) Parties may wish to address the possibility of the SBI considering the agenda item on "implementation of the Convention by Annex I Parties", only once a year in a comprehensive and consolidated way, rather than placing it on the agenda of every SBI meeting. This could be done at the SBI session held in conjunction with the COP.

D. Late submissions of national communications

21. It was pointed out that, whereas national communications contain valuable information, late submission of these reports makes the task of preparing a meaningful compilation and synthesis difficult. The view was expressed that national communications are quickly out of date, especially with respect to the policy development process, and so there is a need to explore what can be done by Parties and by the secretariat to ensure timely submission of these reports, as well as of the annual inventories.

22. **Suggestion**: Parties may wish to adopt a date for submission of fourth national communications from Annex I Parties far enough in advance to give Parties enough time to prepare the communication (for example, 15 April 2006). Parties may also wish to consider if there is a need for any measures that would facilitate the timely submission of national communications.

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[4] When considering financial implications, Parties may wish to note that convening two two-day meetings of 10 experts (of which five are funded) per year in conjunction with meetings of the subsidiary bodies would entail additional costs for the biennium of approximately US$ 7,200 (assuming that these experts would also be delegates to the sessions, and based on average per diem of US$ 180). The option of conducting one two-day workshop annually over the next biennium would require a budget of about US$ 64,400 (calculated on the basis of funding 10 experts, each with four days per diem and a round trip economy class ticket costing US$ 2,500).